

# Conversation Notes

## Community Conversation

## Healthy Homes & Home Repair

Friday, April 13, 2012 | Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD) Office

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The Healthy Homes & Home Repairs community conversation brought together key stakeholders whose efforts are dedicated to providing critical home repair services to help keep residents' homes hazardous –free and accessible. As a result, these services create healthier homes and preserve the affordable housing stock in Austin. Local organizations that participated in this event included: Austin Area Urban League, Austin Habitat for Humanity, Community Action Network, Easter Seals of Central Texas - Community Housing Services, Home Repair Coalition, Meals and Wheels and More, and Women.Design.Build.

The dynamic conversation provided an opportunity for several participants to voice their unique perspectives and offer insight on how the City can enhance partnerships, create a more comprehensive approach in offering services and streamline processes to ensure a more prompt and efficient repair process. The consistent theme taken from the conversation was the need for a comprehensive assessment tool that could be utilized by the City of Austin and local service providers to identify households in need of home repair. In addition, there were requests for more collaboration and consultation between the City of Austin and local agencies when designing and launching new home repair programs. There was also mention that NHCD should explore other city's (e.g. Baltimore, Maryland) home repair business models. The City of Baltimore is a leader in integrating a collaborative home repair program design that has enhanced partnerships, braided funding resources, and improved overall outcomes on home repair programs; thus, increasing access and more effectively serving its clients.

Outlined below are current programs offered by the City of Austin and areas participants identified as opportunities and challenges regarding the NHCD's's current practices and ideas for overcoming these barriers.

### **Current City of Austin Programs**

- Architectural Barrier Removal (Owner/Rental) – NHCD
- Homeowner Rehabilitation Loan Program – NHCD
- GO! Repair Program – NHCD
- Emergency Home Repair – NHCD (current program - added to the list after the April 13<sup>th</sup>)
- LeadSmart Program – NHCD
- Private Lateral Program – Austin Water Utility and NHCD
- Short-Term Displacement Assistance – Code Compliance
- Weatherization – Austin Energy

### **Objective of the meeting:**

Gather feedback on how the City's Neighborhood Housing and Community Development (NHCD) Office can strengthen its home repair programs and services to create healthier homes for Austinites.

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## Opportunities

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### Feedback:

- Expedite the process for sewer line program
- Collaborate more with stakeholders on new programs at the beginning of the process
- Be proactive on sites for sewer lines
- More collaboration among City programs and City to external programs
- Central application that all organization use with one comprehensive inspection
- Centralized database of providers and clients (privacy issues)
- Recoup costs at point of sale
- Comprehensive assessment tool
- Learn from other cities who are doing it well (Baltimore, Maryland)
- Combine conversation with Ending Community Homelessness Coalition, who are also moving towards a common screening/assessment tool
- House all programs in one place (NHCD)
- More creativity and collaboration – sense of urgency
- Workforce development – cross training
- City departments join Home Repair Coalition
- More flexibility, less expensive costs per unit with non-profit organizations vs. City departments (e.g. procurement budget, etc.)
- Non-profits can bring additional funding if supported better by the City of Austin

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## Challenges

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### Feedback:

- Sustainability – we are going to run out of money/funding
- Getting questions answered (by agencies or clients)
- Specialty design of different programs makes changing the system challenging
- Defining geographic boundaries of City programs
- Need healthcare network at the table



Thank you very much for your participation.  
[www.austintexas.gov/housing](http://www.austintexas.gov/housing)

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